

THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



A MOONLIGHT RIDE.

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY:

OR, ADVENTURES IN JAMAICA THIRTY YEARS AGO.
CHAPTER XXIV.—A MOONLIGHT RIDE.

The rainy season was approaching, when all unversed in the art of swimming would be confined to the house. But there was still a clear week before the rains could legitimately set in; and as all the phenomena of nature in these latitudes were

as regular in their courses as a ship's chronometer, we felt ourselves quite safe in writing to Rington, and proposing an excursion to Blue Mountain Peak.

Our proposal was accepted, with "lose no time" in the postscript. Jasper could not accompany us; Johnny Gibson was, as usual, too lazy. "It was exertion enough for him," he said, "to drink sangaree and smoke away mosquitoes; even that made him perspire horribly."

So Harry and I started by ourselves immediately upon the receipt of Mat Rington's note; Cupid and the saddle-bags were to follow on a third horse as soon as he could get our things ready.

Our point of rendezvous was Fernside, Rington's coffee plantation—the highest cultivated spot on the island. It was situated on a ridge of the Blue Mountain range, and was said to be 4000 feet above the level of the sea. It was therefore just half way to the top of the highest peak, the elevation of which is put at 8000 feet.

Our course was the same as before, till we reached the Botanical Gardens, when, instead of turning to the right, towards Bath, we kept straight up the valley until we were close under St. Catherine's Peak, which towered above our heads in solitary grandeur; we then inclined to the right; and after crossing the Yallahs river, the road became more steep and rugged, the scenery grander, and the air fresher.

As we rode along the last mountain ridge before reaching Fernside, the moon rose in calm and cloudless splendour. We involuntarily stopped to admire and wonder at the magic scene before us. The path along which we were winding was scarcely wide enough to admit of firm footing for a single horse. On our left, the perpendicular sides of the ridge rose high above us; to the right was a sheer descent into an unfathomable abyss—unfathomable to our eyes, as we looked far, far down into the yawning gulf, where black clouds of dense vapour rolled solemnly and noiselessly along; not a ray, not a glimmer of light pierced the thick darkness into which one false step of our horses would have plunged us.

I shuddered as I looked into the bottomless pit over which we were literally leaning; for it is a well-known fact that mules and horses accustomed to mountain passes, invariably select the outside edge of the path along which to travel, inclining their bodies towards the precipice. And this, though to the uninitiated it will appear strangely imprudent, is in reality a wise instinct of self-preservation; for, by clinging too closely to the rocky wall, they run the risk of coming suddenly in contact with some projecting ledge, which would surely topple them over the narrow path into the very danger they seek to avoid.

"There is but one step here from time to eternity," said Harry; "I always seem to be nearer to God amongst the mountains than anywhere else."

"I love the mountains too," I replied; "but I never saw mountains by moonlight before: nothing like these, at least. How grand! how sublime! what a mystery and indistinctness envelope the whole!"

"That mystery and indistinctness increase tenfold the sublimity of the scene, to my mind, Brook; nothing is clearly defined; nothing begins—nothing ends: the tops of the mountains and the depths of the ravines are alike shrouded in mysterious darkness; whilst here and there a gleam of moonlight strikes on the salient point of a rock, or flickers amongst the tall trees. Every moment the lights and shadows change as the moon rises higher. Ha! she is over St. Catherine's Peak now! See what a flood of light she pours along the lower

ridges; how the dark heavy vapours become bright and airy, as though touched by the wand of an enchantress!"

But the deep profound at our feet still remains in impenetrable darkness; still does the black vapour roll noiselessly and solemnly along.

The sound of a horse's hoof was heard behind us. "Is that you, Cupid?" I called out.

"Yes, Massa; I'm berry late, but nigger loss him shoo, an' I 'top to look for him, an' den—"

"Never mind all that now. Are we in the right road?" I asked rather anxiously, for neither Harry nor I had ever been in these parts before. I was therefore much relieved when Cupid answered in the affirmative, adding, "Dere aint no odder road dis way, sa;" which satisfactorily accounted for our not having chosen a wrong one; but at the same time greatly diminished any credit to which we might have felt inclined to lay claim, on the score of superior skill and sagacity in finding our way amidst these unknown regions.

"There are some scenes, Harry," I said as we moved on, "which one feels one never can forget; I am certain I shall not forget the one we have just looked upon." I never have.

The barking of dogs and the glimmer of lights heralded our approach to Fernside.

"Here you are at last! Better late than never," said Rington, as he shook us warmly by the hand.

"What have you been about? I was half afraid you had fallen over some precipice or other; for our roads up here are not exactly macadamized, nor wide enough for his Majesty's mail. But come in, come in!"

We explained that we had been looking, but not tumbling over a precipice; and, following our host into the house, we were agreeably surprised by the sight of our old friends of Smiling Valley.

"Well done, Rington," said Harry; "so you have persuaded Gordon to ascend the Blue Mountains after all: capital!"

"No, no, not a bit—not a bit, Captain! I've just come up here to give you two gentlemen the meeting, forbye having a crack wi' an old freend; but ye'll no catch me clambering and scratching up the face o' yon hill, like a cat after a canary: the lad Mac will go along wi' ye—he's been talking o' no-thing else since he first heard of the trip."

"We'll see, we'll see!" said Rington, rubbing his hands with great glee; "would you believe it, although Gordon has been upwards of fifteen years in Jamaica, he has never been to Blue Mountain Peak!"

Whereupon a volley of exclamations was launched against the busher.

"Was it possible!—It couldn't be true! Oh, he must go—we wouldn't let him off!" To all of which he opposed the dead weight of grim silence, accompanied by negative shakes of the head.

"But how was it that you never went up when you first came out, and you living within sight of the Peak?" asked Harry.

"I was too busy then, Captain, and now I'm too auld—now I'm too auld and stiff."

"Let him alone," said Rington, winking hard; "let him be, and come to supper."

"The lad Mac" had meanwhile been renewing

his acquaintance with Tom, who seemed delighted to see him. I saw the busher's eyes twinkle as he caught sight of the two friends; but he said nothing. The keen mountain air had given me an immense appetite (a perfectly unnecessary gift, by the by, my flat country appetite being sufficiently large, to say the least of it), and I did full justice to the good cheer placed before us. After supper we drew round a smouldering wood fire, and in place of cool sangaree, sipped our hot whisky punch; and glad enough we were of both the fire and the punch, for at that height the land breeze, as it came off the tops of the mountains, was positively cold.

"I tell you what, gentlemen, you have run it rather hard—drawn it *rayther* fine, you know!" said Rington, suddenly.

"About the wet season, you mean?" asked Harry.

"Exactly so! It doesn't always keep to a day; and moreover, thunder-storms very frequently visit us a week or so before the wet season sets in."

"I should like amazingly to witness a real good tropical thunder-storm," I observed; "I have seen several little fellows, but never one on a grand scale."

"You would never forget it, if you did," said Rington; "it would try your nerves, I can tell you! It is a magnificent, an awful sight, certainly; but I hope we shall not have one to-night. If we have, we shall not see the sun rise from the Peak, to-morrow morning."

"By the way, Rington," said Harry, "what time do you start? In the middle of the night, sometime, I suppose, if we are to be at the top before the sun rises."

"We must be off by one o'clock—not a moment later. It is now just ten; so 'make your game,' gentlemen! Who says 'bed?'"

"Are you much troubled wi' rats here, Rington?" asked the busher.

"Not much in the house, but the coffee sheds are full of them; there is a room just at the back, beyond the kitchen, where old coffee bags are kept, that absolutely swarm with them."

"Hoot awa'!" cried the busher, with the old twinkle in his eyes; "the vara place for Mac and his friend Tom! Hoot awa' wi' yoursel, lad, an' tak' the bit doggie wi' ye; ye'll ha'e rare sport wi' the rats, the twa o' ye, ain inside the hoose, an' the ither oot!"

"Well," said Rington, "I shall lie down for half an hour; you, gentlemen, can do as you please."

We all pleased to follow his example.

"There is no occasion for you to go to bed so early, Gordon, as you are not going with us, you know," observed Rington.

"Oh," said the busher, rising and yawning fearfully, "I mean to see you off, though. As you rightly observe, I'll no' gang up the mountain."

Rington winked desperately, and poked his elbow into my side with startling emphasis, as he ushered us to our several rooms.

I lay down in my clothes, as also did Harry, who occupied the same room. But I could not sleep: I talked as long as he would answer me; and then I looked at the moon, and longed for one o'clock, and wondered whether we should get to the Peak before the sun rose,

At length the light of the moon waxed dimmer and dimmer; I heard Tom's smothered bark as he slept, and then I heard and saw no more.

CHAPTER XXV.—BLUE MOUNTAIN PEAK.

It did not seem five minutes since I closed my eyes, when I heard Rington's voice in the room bidding us "turn out."

This order was promptly obeyed, and we were soon ready for a start.

As we left the house, Gordon joined us. "I'll just go with ye as far as the foot o' the hill," he said.

"All right," replied Rington; "and now let's be off."

The moon was down, and we had nothing but the stars to light our path. But Rington seemed to know it well; and on we went through low brushwood, and across open glades, till, after about a couple of hours' walking, we came amongst denser wood and taller trees. Rington came to a halt. "We must stop here a bit," he said; "it's pitch dark in there at present, and we might miss the path; we are not far from the top now; a sharp burst of fifteen or twenty minutes will take us up, but we must have a streak of daylight first."

Accordingly, down we sat under the shelter of a friendly bank, and pretty close together too, for the air was uncommonly keen up there at that early hour; it might have been Snowdon we were ascending instead of the Blue Mountains, as far as warmth of atmosphere was concerned. We had not to wait long, however.

"Now, then, we may start," said Rington, who had been reconnoitring in the bush. I can see half-a-dozen yards before me, and that's enough for locomotion. "I suppose you call this 'the foot of the hill,' and mean to leave us here, eh, Gordon? so adieu till we meet again, which will be in about two hours, more or less; and mind you stir up Jemima, and have a good breakfast ready for us—anything she has got, for I forgot to give any orders; a quarter of a donkey and a hamper of greens: we shall be fit to eat him without skinning by the time we get back!"

The busher had been tying an immense red silk handkerchief tightly round his waist whilst Rington was speaking.

"Deed you may jest stir up your ain servants, and quarter your ain donkeys; I'll neither make nor meddle with them. Go ahead, man! or the sun will be on the top o' the Peak before us. Hech, sirs! the chiel thinks no one can climb a bit of a brae-side but himsel'!"

"Ha, ha! well done, Gordon!" shouted Rington. "Forward, then! and put your best legs foremost, gentlemen; this 'bit of a brae-side' will take the chill off you, I expect, and open your pipes too, or I am much mistaken."

He plunged into the bush as he spoke; we following in Indian file as best we might.

I was positively shivering when we made this second start, and glad enough to be on the move once more; but Rington's prophecy was, at all events in my case, speedily verified; "the chill" was soon "off," and the perspiration pouring down my face before we had gone a hundred yards.

The ascent became steeper at every step—at times all but perpendicular; and we were often obliged to swing ourselves up by the roots of the trees, which crossed the path continually. So high were these same roots out of the ground, that we as frequently passed under the arches they formed as over them; but there was nothing to cut away, as in the ascent of the John Crow: all impediments in the shape of creepers, wild vines, etc. had been cleared off; the gigantic roots being considered, and very properly so, as aids, not obstructions. But still, it was not a place to race up with impunity. Never was the old adage, "It's the pace that kills," more perfectly exemplified. We had no time for loitering, not a moment to spare, or the sun would be up before us, as was evident from the increasing light.

On, then, we tore and strove and struggled; not one instant's pause, not a moment's breathing-time was allowed. Never in all my life, either before or since, were my sinews, muscles, and powers of endurance—in one word, my "bottom"—so severely tried as in that short but rapid ascent.

Up at last! on the top of the highest peak we stood panting and breathless. A faint "hooray" was all we could accomplish. The sun had not yet risen: we were in time; and, what was still better, not a cloud rested on the spot where we stood.

"This is luck indeed," cried Rington; "the Peak very seldom has his head out of the clouds so early as this; I have been up here twice before already, for the express purpose of seeing the sun rise, and have been disappointed each time."

"The only time I was here, it was in the evening," said Harry: "our object was to see the sun set; and magnificent it was."

"More gorgeous, but not so grand or so wonderful as the sight we shall see presently, I expect," replied Rington; "it is but a cloudy chaos at present."

And a most singular and imposing effect had this same "cloudy chaos." Above was the clear sky, without a speck or a spot to break the broad expanse of tender pearly grey peculiar to early morning, save where, in the "eastern board," the roseate flush of the rapidly ascending sun deepened and extended along the distant horizon. Below was one universal cloud, wrapping as in a pall the whole earth. Not one single pinnacle, not a rock, not a tree was visible—nothing save the three highest peaks, upon the loftiest of which we stood. It was a most striking, a most singular spectacle; we were indeed fairly above the clouds. And now, as with a sudden leap, the sun bursts forth in all his glory. How magical the effect! how rapid the change! Peak after peak, ridge after ridge, appear as the heavy mists are riven asunder and dispersed into thin air. Massive clouds roll upwards from the hollows of the mountains, broken into fantastic shapes all a-glow with varied tints of unrivalled richness and beauty. The dark sombre woods, the misty grey mountains, casting their broad shadows far over the plain beneath, contrasted grandly with the light above. Higher and higher rose the sun, further and farther the night vapours sailed away into the blue expanse. And now the

whole island lay before us clear and distinct. A few light mists still floated along the sides of the mountains, and a few bright clouds still hung stationary above the highest peaks, as though unwilling to leave the spot where they were born and bred.

The glories of this wonderful sunrise, which I have so feebly, and may be foolishly, attempted to describe, having passed away, we turned our attention to the view before us. Owing to the height at which we stood, and the extreme rarity of the atmosphere, we could see to a distance almost fabulous in its extent.

Jamaica is about 150 miles in length; Blue Mountain Peak cannot be above 25 miles from Morant Point, the eastern extremity of the island; the western extremity could not, therefore, have been less than 120 miles from the spot where we stood; and yet the sea was dimly visible beyond that western point. Kingston, which was about 30 miles off, was seemingly at our feet. We could see people walking in the streets quite plainly.

Harry, who was in uproarious spirits, declared that he recognised our old Doctor, M'Mull; "he knew his shuffling walk," he said; but we would not stand that, neither need you, reader.

To the north, immediately beneath us, lay our old friend Port Antonio; farther round we made out Annotta Bay; and thirty miles beyond that, we could see the ships in St. Anne's Bay. Many points and promontories, of which we knew not the names, were visible still farther away to the north-west. On the south side we looked down upon Morant Bay, Kingston, Port Royal, Portland Point, Pedro Bluff, and numerous other points and bluffs stretching into the blue water.

It was truly a magnificent view, and, I should think, one scarcely to be rivalled on earth. The Himalayas are doubtless on a far grander scale, and possibly as rich in tropical splendour. The Alps are more stupendous, more savage, more awe-inspiring. But where will you find such a combination of all that tends to beautify this most beautiful world? Lofty mountains clothed to their very summits with all the profuse luxuriance of tropical vegetation; deep ravines, down the sides of which dash many a sparkling stream, now hid from sight beneath the overhanging woods, now leaping madly over roots and rocks, festooned and draped with brilliant flowers and soft-toned sheltering foliage, Nature's choicest gifts. Sunny valleys, extensive plains, wide savannahs, gorgeous with a golden harvest, teeming with a prodigality of wealth; with here a broad stream winding silent and calm amidst the ripening crops—there a cluster of buildings, half hidden beneath the protecting branches of gigantic trees; whilst towns and villages, their white roofs glittering in the sun, were dotted about from coast to cliff throughout the plains, and up the mountain sides, in the most picturesque confusion. And, as a frame to this wondrous picture, a setting to these sparkling gems, behold the sea, encircling the whole with a broad belt of serenest blue—a beautiful and faithful reflection of the azure sky above. Can you pick me out a brighter gem from Nature's jewellery?

When our eyes and our senses were thoroughly satiated by gazing on the grand panorama which lay stretched out before us, we began to feel the effects of that "sharp burst" before mentioned.

"I'd give a pound I had my head in yon burn. I'm as dry as a smoked haddock," said the bushier.

"You shall dip your beak into better stuff for a penny," laughed Rington, beckoning to his man Joe.

A couple of bottles of champagne were speedily produced, their necks as speedily broken, and the contents gratefully quaffed by four as thirsty men as ever stood on the top of Blue Mountain Peak. My heart smote me as I drained the last drop from the bottle, and I looked at Joe; his mouth was glued to the calabash which hung at his side, and my pity was merged in admiration at his enduring bibacity.

In less than an hour we were seated at breakfast at Fernside; and, as far as my memory serves me, not a word was spoken for fully twenty minutes after we sat down.

BETWEEN SEVERN AND WYE.

THE shortest and pleasantest route from London to the banks of the Severn lies along the Great Western Railway as far as Swindon, and thence along the line to Gloucester, which runs through the vales of Stroud and Rodborough, at a sufficient elevation to command a view of the scenery. In this part of the route we have a series of woods, forests, pastures, and mountain sides, alternating with silvery streams and populous towns and villages; the whole showing like a glimpse of Switzerland on a very miniature scale, with the snow-clad peaks left out of the view.

Crossing the Severn not far from Gloucester, we are on the western and Welsh side of the river, the line running thence into South Wales. We stop at a small town on Severn's bank, which town is built on a sloping ridge, whose top overlooks a wide expanse of country, through which the broad stream, now amplified to an imposing width, curves and winds for miles and miles in either direction, losing itself in the haze and shadowy gloom of the far-off hills. The church of the little town stands near the highest point of the ridge, and is conspicuous in the landscape for many leagues along the broad flat alluvial lands below; and the churchyard, which commands the finest view, terminates abruptly in a precipice overhanging the water. Right fronting this point of view is the base of a peninsula formed by a mighty bend of the river, which, in the form of a loop, incloses a vast level area, latterly converted by the good people of Gloucester into an island by the cutting of that canal which has made of their inland city a port, and rendered their wharves and warehouses accessible by sea-going ships.

The Severn here is daily the scene of a curious phenomenon not at all common, indeed one which occurs but at few other places all the world over. We read of the "bore," in connection with the great Amazon river in South America, and with

some of the rivers running into the sea at British Granada, as well as at a few other places. On the French coast also, at Caudebec on the Seine, the "bore" comes in at the turn of the tide in a rather portentous manner, more than startling to the stranger. Anciently there stood a small island in the estuary of that river, on which island were a fishing village and a monastery, which had both flourished for many generations. One morning early, at the time of spring-tide, the "bore" came roaring up the estuary with unwonted vigour and unprecedented altitude, lashing and devouring the shores on either side, and covering the snug island with its foam and spray, as it had done before from time immemorial. But lo! this time, to the dismay and horror of the inhabitants of the coasts, when the "bore" had passed, and its yeasty surges had subsided, the island, with its huts, houses, monastery and all, had disappeared, and the billows flowed on uninterruptedly over the spot where they once had been. There was a sorrowful season of weeping and lamentation among the friends of the lost, and there was something more than a nine days' wonder for all the dwellers on the neighbouring coast. But the marvel of marvels was yet to come. Two hundred years elapsed; the story of the sunken monastery and the martyrs of the tide, if not totally forgotten, had subsided into a legendary tradition—a tale of woe and wonder for winter evenings, when storms blew loud without, or a yarn for listless seamen when the winds were hushed and the sails flapped idly against the mast. The "bore" had made its regular visitations during all that long interval, rolling its thunder-march over the graves of its victims; but now again, on early morning, comes the "bore," and this time the rushing waters upheave again to view the long sunken island, with the wrecks of the old town, and the solid walls still standing of the ancient monastery! It was not a mere momentary phantom that could be doubted. During the whole flowing of the tide there stood the fearful vision palpable to sight; though no man appears to have had courage enough to land on the goblin soil and question it of its doom. When the tide fell, the island went down once more, never again to revisit "the glimpses of the moon." Strange as this tale reads, the whole of the facts are well attested and carefully recorded in the local archives, at the two several periods of the disappearance and reappearance of the fated island.

The "bore," as we saw it in the Severn, is no such a threatening phenomenon as the above; much less is it anything comparable to that at the Amazon, where it comes thundering on, a solid wall of water, forty feet in height: still, it is a curious and interesting spectacle well worthy of observation. The first indication we get of it is a hollow rushing sound heard at a distance, and which, serving as a warning note, fixes the attention; then a line of foam is seen crossing the river diagonally, which line, as it approaches nearer, resolves itself into an upright wall of water erect as a plumb-line, bearing a white curling crest on the summit, and advancing against the stream at the rate of a good rapid walk. As it passes, the

river rises to the height of the wall, so that it is not advisable to be standing too near the marge while watching its coming; and when it has passed, the ebb has changed to the flow, the current of the river moving from the sea landward. The phenomenon is not difficult of explanation; it is evidently due to the action of the turning tide upon a rapid stream running for a long distance over a shallow channel. In friths and rivers where the water is deep, though there is often a rough conflict of the meeting waters at the change from ebb to flow, there is never a "bore."

In the little town where we have taken up our quarters, we are on the verge of the Forest of Dean, into which we take the first opportunity of plunging on a tour of observation. The forest is a picturesque wild district, which for ages had the character of a sort of privileged land, the abode of a rather lawless or, to speak more correctly, extralegal race. They are described by an old writer as "a sort of robustic wild people, that must be civilized by good discipline and government;" and they would seem to have justified the description. To have been born within the forest limits appears in times past to have been considered a title to a species of right in the forest property, not clearly definable perhaps, but all the more lucrative on that very account. The forest abounding in coal and iron as well as timber, the foresters assumed the right of working the mines, and of burning the trees to blast and smelt the ore. Nominally, they took only the blighted and waste timber, reserving the rest for the government; but, really, they took whatever they stood in need of, spoiling the timber, first by wantonly boring or barking it, and then claiming it as waste because it was spoiled. In defence of such fancied privileges as these, they at times fought manfully, and not a few of them succumbed to the doom of the law. All such excesses have, however, long ceased; and, although the foresters of the present day are wild enough in appearance, they pursue their industry in a peaceful way and profess obedience to the law.

For several centuries the iron which was wrought in the forest, and which had the reputation of being of the best quality, was not, strictly speaking, the product of the mine, but was smelted from vast masses of half-worked ore left by the Romans in a hundred places where they had worked the mines during their rule in Britain. The Romans, owing to their imperfect means of smelting, got but a moiety of the metal from the ore; and the cinders, which they left in heaps upon the surface, remunerate the modern miner, through his knowledge of superior methods, better than the virgin ore which, lying deep in the bowels of the earth, has to be lifted above-ground at a heavy cost.

It is the presence of coal and iron mines, with the scattered mining settlements, that impart to the Forest of Dean so wild, and in many places so unforest-like an aspect. You pass from dense groves of oak, of beech, and huge holly, out suddenly upon bleak moor-like wastes, dotted with the humble cottages of the miners, with heaps of rubble piled round the pit's mouth, with the snug dwellings of overseers, inspectors, managers, and

capitalists, with blast furnaces and tall steam chimneys, and here and there a straggling hamlet boasting a little gabled chapel or a modern church. Now you are on a hard macadamized road, running beneath the foliage of mighty oaks; and now you are toiling through a slough of mire up to your horse's knees or the axles of your gig. For a mile or more you are shut close in by the greenwood, the view on all sides bounded by the solid trunks that are to form the wooden walls of England, numbers of them lying prostrate and peeled white and ready for the shipbuilder's yard; and anon you are traversing an open height, commanding a view of distant hills and picturesque bluffs rising one above another, and towns and villages lying far down in the hollows, where the green tree-tops wave like grassy meadows, and the little silver streams are flashing back the sunlight. Then you meet the oddest figures plodding on foot or mounted on the veriest hacks of horses, who do not respond to your greeting, but stare at you as you pass; or, in some secluded glade you drop upon a pleasure party ruralizing in the solitude.

In the centre of the forest stands the Speech-house, a substantial and roomy stone building, erected in the time of the second Charles, for holding the Swaimote Courts, "for preserving the vert and venison." The house is now used as an inn, and the quaint old court-room in the rear of the bar, where in former times the judges sat on the railed-off bench to hear complaints and judge poaching delinquents, is now the frequent arena of picnic banquets, of archery feats and forest festivities; the fiddlers usurping the place of the judges, and the merry-making guests that of the delinquents. Here are preserved some curious and most grotesque whimsicalities of nature, in the shape of odd and ridiculous growths of timber found at various times on the forest trees; and here also are some huge branching antlers of the deer, though the deer themselves have long disappeared from the limits of the forest. The house stands in a wide open space, on a noble site opening upon a picturesque view, such as Wilson or Gainsborough would have loved to paint.

Following a devious route, which, being strangers to the place, we cannot attempt to describe, and which leads us over swelling hills and down many a shady woodland dell—past humble cottages skirting the roadside and stately mansions half-veiled in leafy umbrage, we escape from the forest not far from the village of Ruardean, and are bowling along the banks of the Wye towards the town of Ross. The ruins of old Goodrich Castle frown on an eminence which looks down upon the river to the left, and from thence a short and pleasant drive of something less than an hour brings us to Ross. The town of John Kyrle, whose name and noble deeds will survive as long as the tongue he spoke, is a neat little burgh built on the slope of a hill, whose summit overlooks the windings of the Wye and a fine panorama of undulating and picturesque country beyond. Its chief ornament at a distance is the "heaven-directed spire" raised by the "Man of Ross" himself; but the place is interesting from its evident antiquity, and is, moreover, cleanly and

well preserved. Reaching it on a market-day, we find it thronged with the population of the district, and busy as a hive of bees. The market-house, supported on columns of crumbling stone, has a time-worn aspect, appearing much older than it is, having been built about 200 years ago. The house of the "Man of Ross" stands opposite to it, but has been split up into two houses, both of which are now occupied by tradesmen. On one of them is a medallion portrait in stone of Kyrle himself, in a flowing wig and long neckcloth, though, unfortunately, it is but a sorry performance. In the church, which is a rather handsome edifice, two small elm trees have grown up spontaneously in the pew where the Man of Ross was accustomed to worship, and, having been suffered to grow, now wave their branches over the spot where he sat for so many years. They are elegant objects, and appear to flourish well; they form one of the most singular memorials to be met with in a parish church, and it is no marvel that they are lovingly tended and venerated. John Kyrle died in 1724, in his eighty-fifth year; but it was not until fifty-four years afterwards that the beautiful monument which now stands in the wall of the chancel, close to the communion rails, was erected to his memory. It is of white and dove-coloured marbles, and bears the simple inscription: "This monument was erected in memory of John Kyrle, commonly called the Man of Ross."

In the rear of the church is the "Prospect," an area which Kyrle laid out as a public walk, and planted with trees for the recreation of the inhabitants. The walk extends for nearly a mile through most agreeable scenery, the trees having long since reached a luxuriant maturity, and adding wondrous charms to the landscape; it terminates at rather an abrupt descent towards the river, and at this point Kyrle placed a neat summer-house. Unfortunately, the men of Ross who succeeded "the Man," proved insensible to the value of the benefits he had designed them, and failed to perpetuate the advantages he bequeathed them. The groves of beautiful trees which Kyrle planted, still, for the most part, remain, and lend magnificence to the scenery; but the "Prospect" ceased to be what it was designed to be, the common property of the people. The seats which were erected for the weary traveller have disappeared; some of the ground has been declared not public; and the summer-house, though it still stands at the termination of the route, is nothing but a tumble-down ruin of old bricks and timber. It strikes us as strange that the veneration which still subsists for the memory of "the Man," among the people of Ross, was not sufficiently active to preserve to their poor the benefactions he had established. It is but just to add that of late, evidences of an improved feeling in this respect have not been wanting in the town.

After a pleasant dinner at the Royal Hotel, whose ornamental gardens abut on the "Prospect," if they are not indeed a part and parcel of the same, we resume our drive, and taking the road to Mitcheldean, and thence past Flaxley Abbey, return to the banks of the Severn in time to see the fishers of

our little town dragging the river for salmon—a species of industry which strikes us as an excellent school for patience, inasmuch as the ceremony has to be repeated again, and again, and again before a single captive is found in the toils.

The white church tower on the hill-top glimmers in the last level rays of the setting sun as we draw near the quiet town, and the gloom of twilight settles on the broad surface of the saffron-coloured waters as we finish our ramble between Severn and Wye.

THE BAMBOO AND ITS MULTITUDINOUS USES.

It has very justly been observed by a recent intelligent traveller, that "amidst the many gifts of Providence to a tropical region, the bamboo is perhaps the most benignant, appropriate, and accessible." Dense in its growth, and sometimes reaching to a considerable height, I know not of any tree or bush that can rival the bamboo, whether viewed in the golden sunlight, or under the influence of the soft night breeze and resplendent moon, whose beams throw a silvery mantle over its gently waving feathery branches. But this beauty is not its only excellence; there are many other things in the vegetable kingdom which are exceeding fair to look upon, but which, apart from the gratification afforded to the eye or other senses, cease, as far as human knowledge extends, to afford any further benefit to mankind. In its wild and uncultivated state, on arid plains where the sun strikes fiercely upon the head of the weary wayfarer, the bamboo affords not only a welcome shade, but the undulatory movements of its countless branches constitute a delightfully cool atmosphere—a priceless boon, to be appreciated only by those who have journeyed in the tropics and availed themselves of its shelter. Another step, and we find it, under the art of man, forming impenetrable hedges and fences, its pristine luxuriance cropped into formal and, in many cases, dwarf specimens, such as, though on a far more gigantic scale, our own box hedges in England; yet, even under this disadvantage, the bamboo presents still a striking and remarkable feature, even amidst the picturesque trees, plants, and flowers of that loveliest of lovely islands, Pulo Penang.

Seated under the shade of a most umbrageous bamboo copse, reposing from heat and fatigue, we see a miserable group, the half-starved inhabitants of some inland village, where the barren soil yields but an ungrateful recompense to the sweat and toil of the ploughman, and where, consequently, the impoverished natives are compelled to adopt other handicrafts to raise them the miserable pittance which is to satisfy their daily cravings. In a relaxing climate like India, where the natural indolence of the natives is still more augmented by the stifling lack of any breeze during the greater part of the day, basket-making is a very favourite and not unremunerative occupation. The better to carry on this trade, especially as their own miserable mud huts are heated to a point nearly sufficient to bake them, the poorer pariahs, armed with a few

sharp knives, attended by their wives, carrying *chatties** wherein to cook the mid-day meal of curry and rice, resort to where we have just discovered them; and there, with the raw material close at hand, they set to work with heart and will, but leisurely withal. Chopping off the tenderer and best suited boughs of the bamboo that is shielding them from the scorching heat, and slitting the same into convenient laths or narrow stripes, they with no small skill fashion them into baskets and stools, some of the former much esteemed for the wear and tear they will undergo when used for loading or discharging grain. Besides these, an endless variety of fans and toys (such, for instance, as babies' rattles, etc.) are constructed by these people; and the whole cargo, though numerous and diversified, being light in weight, is easily conveyed to the nearest market town, and disposed of without much difficulty. This, then, is one of the manifold uses to which the bamboo is rendered subservient.

But whilst the above operatives have been busily engaged about their handicraft, others of a far different and more lucrative calling have approached our bamboo copse in another direction, and these also are busily employed in lopping off the tenderer shoots. One of their party, meanwhile, extemporizes a fire with the dried bark, the withered leaves and twigs of the same plant, and places thereon a huge earthenware caldron, into which, when the water is boiling, the young shoots of the bamboo, after being sliced into proper sizes, are plunged, and where they are permitted to boil until reduced to a proper tenderness, when they are transferred to divers jars, and in the course of time, with the addition of vinegar and other ingredients, or syrup of sugar, become most savoury pickles and sweet preserves, which command a ready and extensive sale amongst all the Europeans in India. The bamboo is also frequently used in lieu of other vegetables, or rather for want of them, by the Europeans, in stews and ragouts, and by the natives in curries and chutneys. We have thus seen how this valuable plant not only affords the means of obtaining support, but actually furnishes food itself from its own offshoots, and that of a delicate and agreeable flavour.

Mottoo Sawmy, the head man of the village near Chindrapattal, has suffered considerable inconvenience from the recent hurricane which has devastated the whole of Madras, prostrating lofty banian trees and equally lofty cocoa-nuts that had resisted the fury of previous tornadoes through many a long year. The pliant bamboo has been bowing to the fury of the howling gale, and by its humility escaped that desolation which has been committed amongst the statelier and apparently stronger tenants of the forest. We might glean a lesson from this, with a moral of undoubted force, but time urges, and so we hurry back to Mottoo Sawmy. Hatchet in hand, he hurries forth at the first cessation of the gale to the nearest bamboo copse, and with unwearied labour lops off from the healthiest and most vigorous trees the portions required for

Indian hut-building purposes; from these he selects the props which have to support the walls, intertwined as they will be by the more delicate branches and leaves which are to constitute a base-work, upon which layers of clay, cow dung, and lime, will form the walls of his hut. From the bamboo he procures all requisites for constructing his hive-like roof; the heavier branches forming the beams, the lighter ones the cross rafters, while the dried leaves and the twigs, formerly intermingled, furnish a thatched roof equally impervious to wind and rain, and only exposed to danger when the periodical hurricanes, to which the tropics are so subject, rage with devastating force and annihilate almost everything that opposes their course.

Besides the foregoing uses, the bamboo affords a weapon offensive and defensive to the ryot or peasant. Its pliant nature and exceeding strength, when properly prepared, renders it the only available substance from which are constructed "pellet bows"—those curious but useful implements of the chase so much used throughout the Madras Presidency, but so little known in any other part of the world. A good stout piece of slit bamboo, after having been duly saturated, is allowed gradually to dry in the shade; it is then shaped conveniently, so as to admit of a double row of cat-gut strings being attached to either end. These are distended towards the extremity by the insertion of two small pieces of bamboo, about a couple of inches apart, and when these are securely lashed with twine, the centre of the two cords is connected by means of a stout piece of cloth, doubled and firmly stitched over them. From this is propelled the sun-dried clay pellet, with such force, and often with such precision, as to prove fatal to many a feathered denizen of the air, however large and however rapid their flight. Precisely opposite to the part from which the pellet is propelled, and lashed firmly round the bamboo of the bow itself, are several thick layers of cloth, which afford a readier hold to the shooter, and protect his left hand from being severely chafed by the sharp edges of the slit bamboo. With all these precautions, however, it requires no small amount of practice—tact in giving a sudden swerve to the strings of the bow, and keenness of eye, to prevent the most painful consequences to such as are not adepts with the weapon. The force with which it projects the pellet is considerable, and almost every novice who has used the pellet bow in field sports can testify how far more frequently he has struck his own left thumb than his aim has proved detrimental to the intended and unharmed victim.

Constructing the pellets for the pellet bow is an operation which gives work to many a pariah child at Madras, who, for the consideration of so many pice a thousand, may any day be encountered in the neighbourhood of clayey swamps, ankle-deep in the mire, assiduously occupied in rolling up the pellets betwixt the palms of his hands, and afterwards sun-baking them in some hot slope or mound. Indirectly, the bamboo in this case gives occupation to hundreds who would otherwise not earn anything. The execution done by the pellet bow, in the hands of an "expert," would hardly be credited.

* Earthenware vessels.



THE BAMBOO AND ITS USES.

For defensive purposes, moreover, the bamboo has rendered good service to the Burmese in the erection of their stockades, which, it will be remembered, caused so much detriment and annoyance to the British invading forces in the war of 1824. By the natives of the whole of the Malayan and Siamese peninsula, as well as by the wild hordes inhabiting the jungles on the coast of Malabar, the bamboo, in conjunction with steel or iron, has also often furnished formidable weapons of offensive warfare; the javelin, the poisoned arrow, (besides the bow from which the arrow was shot,) and even scimitars, so sharply set that they might almost rival the best set razors, having been fabricated from this extraordinary tree. Nor has the bamboo, in its younger and more pliant stages, proved less formidable to the beasts of the jungle, including the tiger. To bend a stout young plant, so that its stoutest and tallest branches were embedded many feet in the earth; to attach to the lower-most portion a decoy—a kid or a bird—with a noose pendant from its branches, is no unusual practice amongst the natives of the Wynard jungle. The unwary chetah, attracted by the cries of its victims, rushes into the snare; the noose tightens round its throat, and in its violent efforts to disengage itself, the buried portion of the bamboo disinters itself from the earth, and, swinging aloft with a mighty reaction, carries with it into the air the savage malefactor, who is there left to swing until its guttural cries attract the village watchers, and a speedy end is put to one more marauder on their poultry yards, themselves, and their families. Here, then, we have the bamboo used as an agent of retribution.

If we turn to China, and some other countries in the East, we find the bamboo transformed into an implement of justice, and, too often, an implement of torture. But this is to pervert from its proper uses this most valuable of all tropical productions.

What a boon to a Crusoe would the discovery of a bamboo plant have proved! With the simple assistance of a good-sized pocket knife, from it he might have fashioned a thousand utilities with but small labour on his part. From it, savages and shipwrecked mariners, by the mere process of friction, have been enabled to procure fire, and that heat so necessary to their weather-beaten and chilled frames; from it are constructed drinking vessels, and the means of conveying, from deep wells or pools, water for the parched lips of the weary wayfarer; in it the half-savage Malay of Sumatra cooks his daintiest meals of rice, eschewing ever afterwards the use of the same vessel again; to it many a poor peasant of the East, whose arid lands would never recompense years of labour, is indebted for that necessary supply of moisture without which vegetation cannot exist, because from it natural aqueducts, miles in extent, may be constructed in a few days, simply by the process of slitting the stouter bamboos in halves and laying them one within another, so that the waters of a spring may be carried over a large extent of land. Upon bamboo rafts the Siamese love to build their floating houses at Bangkok, and so, as the fancy

seizes them, move from one spot to another, without inconvenience or expense in shifting their possessions, from one side of the river to the other. From the bamboo the same Siamese people extract dulcet notes, with an organ constructed of nine or more young bamboos, thoroughly drilled and bound together by an ebony mouth-piece, by blowing through which, chords equal to many church organs may be produced. Authorities assert that paper, and even clothing, can be and are produced from the fine inner fibre that lines the bamboo. Of this we can say nothing; but it is self-evident, from well-known usage and practical experience, that the bamboo gives employment to man, and enables him to earn his food; it affords him shelter and a home, a shade, a means of procuring fire, of irrigating, of cooking, of river navigation; it supplies a delicacy in pickles or sweets; and, what is by no means an unimportant consideration, a means of punishing his evil dispositions, in the shape of a severe bastinadoing.

A DOUR ACROSS COUNTRY.

In the month of October, 1858, a small detachment of Sikh cavalry and infantry, accompanied by two or three European officers, was encamped amid the ruins of a deserted indigo factory in one of the most disturbed districts of Upper Bengal. The factory had been "looted" and burnt by a band of mutinous Sepoys some time previously, and the work of destruction had been complete. Only a small portion of the dwelling-house was standing amidst the *débris* scattered about; the greater portion of the walls were level with the ground, while those still standing, tottering to their fall, seemed to set the laws of gravitation at defiance. Beams of wood, broken utensils of all kinds, bits of furniture, dead animals, and scraps of old letters, littered the ground. Ever and anon a vulture winged its slow heavy flight across the spot, or flapped its wings over its revolting banquet. Desolation reigned over the scene, so lately alive with life and activity.

The factory had stood upon a small natural elevation, at the foot of which a broad shallow river flowed sluggishly along through banks of sand. The Sikh encampment was placed outside the ruins of the factory, and the small dingy tents, in shape something like the Australian banyan, were pitched with slovenly irregularity on the slope of the mound. The greater portion of the Eastern warriors are solacing themselves with their morning repast, and with a white cloth wrapped round their loins, and wholly disencumbered of any other article of clothing, are watching with intense satisfaction the culinary process which is converting their *ottah* (a kind of flour) into the thick, greasy, indigestible *jepati*. Some, in an easy military undress, consisting of a Karkee tunic, soiled with many a stain, a buff belt dangling about the shoulders, a turban half untied, the loose end forming a long streamer behind, and with shoes like those worn by the Esquimaux, saunter easily along with an independence of manner charming to behold. Others, stretched at length upon the ground, carol in harsh

guttural accents some mellifluous ditty of their native land.

There is an old white-bearded subahdar, standing in quiet dignity apart from the others; he must be seventy, if he is a day old, yet his thin attenuated though upright figure shows that his years sit lightly upon him. He is singularly grave and taciturn in his demeanour, and is regarded by the Sikhs as an object of especial veneration—a sort of holy man. He rests his claim to this distinction on a species of ascetic gloom, frequent bursts of the most diabolical rage, and a habit of repeating in a low monotonous drawl, not peculiarly edifying, various passages from the *Grunt*—the religious book of the Sikhs. You see that fine-looking fellow a little to his left, six foot high at the very least, and of Herculean proportions, with great black glistening eyes, and glossy beard and mustachios. He is a russulldhar (native officer) of cavalry, and has lately been decorated with the order of merit for conspicuous gallantry in the field. He is never tired of recounting his gallant actions; in short, he is a bore of the first water, and his garrulity is incessant. He has not to go far for an audience, and there is one now in his immediate vicinity, to whom he is narrating with tremendous emphasis some warlike deed, and showing by gesture and tone how fields were won. Yet the man has his good points too, and is as brave as a lion. If he can get a European to listen to him, his happiness is complete. "Soonoo, sahib," (listen, sir,) he says, "the sircar (government) know my merits, but I do not want rewards, I fight for the love of fighting. I only want an opportunity to show what I can do—to rush into the thickest of the fight and fall sword in hand." As he says this, his eyes glisten with the light of battle, and assume a fiendish expression very unpleasant to behold.

At this juncture, the officer in command of the detachment appears at the door of his tent, attired in a short flannel jacket, long boots, and a *solah* hat decorated with a large red and white turban; there is a crowd round him in an instant; all are anxious to hear the news, for the enemy are known to be in the immediate vicinity. "Sound the assembly," he exclaims; and the shrill notes of the bugle ring sharply through the air, and in a moment the whole camp is on the alert; the men hastily buckle on their accoutrements, the sowars saddle their horses, the tents are struck, the camp followers swarm about the baggage, which is soon packed on the elephants and camels, and all is ready for the march. In a little cloud of dust the advance guard moves out of camp followed by the cavalry, then the infantry in a small compact body, their bayonets flashing brightly in the meridian sun. There are no symptoms of flagging or exhaustion in that little band, visions of "loot" keeping up their spirits.

Hours slip by, and the sun declining in the west shoots its burning rays obliquely on the earth, which feels like heated iron beneath the tread. We have been led astray a dozen times by false information as to the enemy's movements, and almost begin to despair of coming up with the fugitives. At length we receive what is considered reliable information,

and the word is passed to the cavalry to advance at the trot. Away we go at a pace which is soon converted into a hand-gallop, across ploughed fields and ravines, splash through water, over hedges, and through ditches. We pick up information as we pass. Dashing into a deserted village, we learn from a miserable looking object, sitting in front of an empty hut, that the enemy have vacated it only half an hour ago. Leaving the village, we come suddenly upon the track of the rebels, plainly visible on the ploughed field to the left. They can't be far off now: as we advance we pass stray horses and camels, which they have left behind in their rapid flight. Suddenly emerging from a thick belt of jungle, we find ourselves on the skirts of a wide-stretching plain, immediately in front of us; and we dash into the plain over the smooth hard turf, at the gallop.

"Here they are at last," we exclaim, reining up our panting horses on the bank of a narrow stream which flowed through the plain. There they were, sure enough, and in considerable force too, numbering 300 at least, on the opposite bank of the stream, at the interval of a few hundred yards, formed into squares, and retreating leisurely along without the slightest appearance of disorder. The sun had some time since sunk in the horizon, and the short Indian twilight was fast waning into night; yet still, with the aid of our glasses, we could distinctly discern the appearance of our foes. Clad in dingy white jackets, the soiled remnant of their former uniform, a cloth wrapped round their loins, bare legs, low round caps, and musket in hand, they fell slowly back with the sullen look of detected criminals. Their faces wore a peculiar aspect; it was that strange-drawn expression of countenance indicative of excessive bodily fatigue and great mental anxiety—a worn harassed look, like that of a felon on whom sentence of death has been passed. Fear was to be traced there, too, in legible characters; but it was the dogged terror of desperation.

While engaged in getting our disordered troop into some degree of order, they salute us with a volley, and that disagreeable "ping" peculiar to musket bullets strikes audibly on the tympanum. They might just as well have fired blank cartridge, however, for the bullets pass over our heads and strike the ground beyond. The second volley is better directed: one saddle is emptied, and several horses are wounded.

We pause for a moment on the bank of the nullah to consider the best course to pursue. To charge the enemy with our small jaded force were utter madness; and yet we could not see them slip from our grasp, when thus brought to bay. After a brief consultation, it was determined to follow the retreating foe, keeping them in sight as long as we could, in order to give time for the infantry to come up. This course resolved on, we plunged our reeking steeds into the stream, and advanced into the plain beyond, under a dropping fire of musketry, which, however, did little execution. As we approach the Sepoys, our men can now use their short carbines with some effect. One of the rebel Sowars, in a reckless outbreak of valour, rides within twenty yards of us, flourishing his sword above his head,

and after taunting us, with Asiatic gesticulations and Hindustani abuse, rides towards his comrades. A score of bullets follow him in his retreat, and one, better directed than the others, has reached its mark; he reels in his saddle, tries to steady himself for a moment, and then falls heavily to the earth. We have just time to glance at the body as we pass; it was that of a large muscular man, with well-trimmed glossy beard and dark oily complexion—the very type of the Mussulman Sepoy. The Sepoys are now in full retreat, taking care to avoid the “open” as much as possible, and, falling back from “tope” to “tope,” we following with cautious steps upon their track.

It is now, with the exception of the feeble glimmer of the stars, quite dark, and we can just distinguish the sombre outline of the “topes” of trees, which are dotted thickly over the plain. The tope which we are now approaching stands out dim and spectral in the gloom; the trees seem like huge spectres interlaced together. We advance within twenty paces of it, and halt our horses, to listen for any sound of the retiring foe.

Suddenly, and as if by enchantment, the whole is lighted up by a brilliant line of fire. “Back, back for your lives; there are the enemy.” We were upon them unawares, and, before we have time to rectify our error, are exposed to a heavy volley of musketry; but the bullets, fired at a greater elevation than was intended, passed harmlessly over our heads; that darkness, under cover of which the enemy were effecting their retreat, probably saved a dozen lives. As it is, however, the shock to the nerves was decidedly unpleasant, and several of our Sowars, under an emotion which had a strong affinity to fear, ducked their heads in the most unsoldierlike manner possible.

Again the darkness is suddenly illuminated by that rival line of flame, and we can just distinguish the white coats behind, and the dark faces gleaming savagely in the back-ground; they have got the range now, and as we wheel hastily to the rear, keeping up a sharp, irregular, though apparently not a very effective fire, the bullets fly through our ranks thick as hail, and with a precision painfully accurate; several horses bite the ground, and a few Sowars are slightly hit. The rebels have evidently taken advantage of this temporary check to make good their retreat, for the musketry suddenly ceases, and all is silent as the grave. Dropping with fatigue, and almost too exhausted to sit our horses, we at last give up the pursuit, more especially as the darkness is so great as to render it impossible to distinguish objects, and, flinging ourselves from our weary steeds, almost as exhausted as their riders, throw ourselves upon the damp hard ground, where we endeavour to snatch such repose as our situation will allow, and are soon wrapped in that deep heavy slumber which follows great bodily fatigue.

Grey and clear dawns the morning, and up we jump, with jaded looks and pale fagged countenances, and gaze eagerly round for some traces of the rebels. Not a sound is to be heard, not a whisper breaks the stillness which has settled upon that wide desolate plain: the sun, fierce and dilated,

like one of those red lamps suspended over the door of a chemist's shop, rests upon the horizon, and already begins to throw forth rays of intolerable brightness. A distant sound is borne upon the wind: it is the yelping of the curs in a deserted village at the opposite extremity of the plain. But where can the enemy be? They have made good use of their time, and are now far beyond pursuit; they have given us the slip, and it is worse than useless following them up.

Scattered over the plain are the relics of yesterday's encounter, and the vultures—those untiring scavengers of the battle field—have already scented their prey. Muskets, pouches, caps, dead bodies of men and animals, lie thickly about, and it is some satisfaction to see that the enemy have suffered more in the *mêlée* of yesterday than our own men. Slowly and languidly we mount our steeds, and proceed to join the infantry, who have come up in the night and are encamped a couple of miles in the rear.

Such was the termination of many a *dour* after the Sepoys, who, when fairly brought to bay, displayed a dogged courage, a steady discipline, and a capacity of enduring fatigue, which has often surprised those who have only had occasion to remark their conduct in the field. Let us hope that, by a wiser and better administration, the British power in India may be so wielded as to make the natives recognise the advantages of a beneficent Christian rule. The sad scenes of the rebellion will be remembered with less pain, if they convey lasting and useful lessons both to the victors and the vanquished.

WAITING FOR A TRAIN.

A MELANCHOLY duty has summoned me to the Brown Town, where I have been staying for a day or two, indulging in a pensive retrospection of events long passed away; visiting scenes endeared to remembrance and too deeply fixed on the memory ever to be effaced, and recalling impressions which, though they date from childhood, are those most profoundly impressed on the mind. I am bound from the Brown Town to the Grey Town, and, having but a brief furlough, am anxious to get away. I take my ticket at the railway station, and am informed that I shall have to change trains at Clodbury, about a dozen miles off. It is a pleasant sunshiny morning as we trundle along on the single line of rail which connects the Brown Town with the trunk line, and which runs side by side with a trickling rivulet through the ploughed fields and pastures. We make very little fuss as we go along, and beyond frightening a few couples of partridges from the water's brink, which skurry off without taking wing, make no sort of sensation whatever. By and by we are on the main line, and steaming a little faster, and some quarter of an hour later we halt at Clodbury, where I am dropped *solus*, to wait for the train to Grey Town. Here I make the interesting discovery that I shall have to wait two hours before proceeding on my journey—that, by an ingenious arrangement of the railway managers, two trains which will pass the station, and might take me to my destina-

tion, will not stop to take me up, and I must wait for the third, which will be due at three o'clock, it being now near one. Well, there is nothing like patience, and we must have lessons in *that*, some way or other. Let us see what account can be rendered of the two hours of waiting.

The station at Clodbury is a very miniature affair, with a platform of some twenty yards in length, and bounded on the north by a small box of a booking-office, and on the south by a still smaller box of a refreshment-room. Between the two there stands a lock-up book-stall some four feet wide, with nobody just now to attend to it, and a sort of blind waiting-room, where a few boxes and baskets, without a guardian, are piled on the table in the centre. In the booking-office the trap-door is closed and the clerk is invisible, but I hear him pottering about in his den, now clinking money, now clattering with the telegraph machine. Beyond the time-table on the walls, there is nothing to interest a stranger in the office, and I turn out to look for amusement elsewhere. I walk to the other end of the platform and look in at the window of the refreshment-room. There are two bottles of soda-water stuck on end on the little counter, one black bottle of something else, and a collection of two sponge-cakes. Behind these sits Mariana of the moated grange in a state of chloroform, or of reverie, and demure and motionless as a statue of Niobe; she does not move at the sound of my slow footstep, and I see nothing but her black-willow branches of drooping ringlets and her pensive profile. I stray on to the rails and look along the perspective of the iron line, which, perfectly straight for seven or eight miles, dies off in a vanishing point to the north, while in the other direction it disappears in a curve within a couple of furlongs. There is not a sound stirring; the village of Clodbury is a mile off; in the dead silence that prevails, I am glad to catch the notes of some small birds who come bounding on to the rails with a quick chaff-chaff. There they are—two, three, four, five, six—all chaffinches, foraging for crumbs among the sweepings of the platform, or pulverizing among the loose earth between the rails; but a movement of mine startles them, and off they go in that bounding sort of flight peculiar to them, and whose outline would be a series of elliptic arches.

These little visitors have hardly made off, when propitious fortune sends a stray duck waddling on to the platform, who reports his advent by an apologetic conciliatory sort of quack, and proceeds to settle himself in the sunshine as if for a nap. I sit down on the sole seat, to enjoy the society of the duck: he winks at me over his back, at the distance of about three feet, and buries his bill in the plumage of his breast, protruding his crop in an aldermanic sort of way, and deliberately wriggling and gravitating with his whole body, as though he meant to take root in the planking—winking vigorously all the while, in quite a confidential way. I feel grateful for his company, and, spite of myself, I begin speculating on those nictitating orbs of his. According to Sir D. Brewster, and the received laws of optics, master duck, teetotaller though he be, ought to see double. Is it so? I ask myself. Does my savoury friend imagine, every time he gobbles up a

grub or a tittle-bat, that he gobbles up two? However this may be, it is certain, if the received doctrines be right, that my duck cannot see stereoscopically, as we human bipeds do; because, from the position of his visual organs, it is physically impossible that he can superimpose the picture received upon the retina of one of them, upon the picture received upon the retina of the other. That being the case, does he see anything but flat pictures, and what are his impressions as to space and distance? What is the mystery of duck vision? and, for the matter of that, what are the visual laws with respect to multitudes of other creatures, (to say nothing of fishes,) who, like my companion duck, have their eyes at the sides of their heads?

My speculations are suddenly put to the rout, and my duck too, by the unlooked-for arrival of a cattle-train, which, but for my scientific reverie, I might have seen approaching. The arrival wakes up one or two officials, who appear on the stage from some unknown retreat, and something like a bustle ensues. The cattle trucks are shunted into a siding, and then the engine which has brought them begins all manner of odd capers, which I could no more understand than I could the Chinese language. Now it runs up the line—now it runs down—now it lugs off an empty truck, now a full one—now it is gone round the curve out of sight and hearing—and now it rushes up the line for a mile, and comes puffing down with a prodigious bang into the siding. All this is a source of intense alarm and terror to the poor sheep in the trucks, who are bumped now this way, now that, and hurled like projectiles against the walls of their prison. In their long journey from the north they have had so much of this treatment that they have learnt experience, and know what to expect from the manœuvres to which they are subject. I take note that they crowd together in the centre, and stand all wedged in a mass, taking special care to guard their heads from contact with the bars of their cage. In one truck is a huge bull, along with a couple of young heifers; the big fellow has got in the middle, so that when the sudden lunges of the truck hurl his heavy mass forward or backward, he finds a cushion in the bodies of his companions. Meanwhile, the engine is fussily active, and by and by the train, which has been increased by its means to double its former length, moves off towards London, and disappears. And not by any means too soon; for lo! a few minutes later comes a passenger train, which darts past the station without stopping, and follows in its rear rather closely. Within a quarter of an hour there is another passenger train, which stops at all the stations in its route, and plods along slowly, but which, as it does not go as far as the Grey Town, is of no use to me. On its arrival, all the station functionaries come forth from their retreats: the book-stall keeper is at his post—the packages in the waiting-room are claimed by their owners—the ticket-clerk is busy at his sliding-trap—the platform is alive with three-and-a-half arrivals for Clodbury—and Mariana, waking up, parts her drooping willowy ringlets, puts on an attractive face, and makes a show of dispensing the sponge-cakes and

soda water, though I do not see that she actually does any business, or that the grand collation in her keeping suffers any disturbance or derangement.

Not more than five minutes have elapsed ere the train is again on its way; the new arrivals have filed off towards Clodbury, the station functionaries have vanished once more, and I am again alone on the platform—now more solitary than before, for Mariana has disappeared in toto, and has veiled her peculiar shrine with a square yard or so of sham venetian blind, which effectually shuts her out from my view. I have a notion that she is getting her dinner—I hardly know why; but soon I am fortified in this conjecture by certain odours of a savoury kind, suggestive to my fancy of the cidolon of a gridiron, with the willowy black ringlets bending over it—said odours exhaling from the sealed-up sanctuary and flavouring the silent air. How very silent it is! and what a strange, desert-kind of feeling comes over one in a silence so dead and profound, and in the presence of full sunshine, with all the material phenomena of life, bustle, and locomotion dumb and motionless around you, as though fixed and spell-struck by the wand of an enchanter.

I am sitting on the lone seat, looking up the long glittering line of rails, dreamily drinking in the "silence which is golden," and thinking of nothing, when, lo! dim, faint sounds of exquisite harmony steal over my dull senses and rouse them to a feeling of delectable enjoyment. Is it a peal of Memnon-like music coming from the clouds? is it the echo of some multitudinous chorus of inarticulate voices divinely concerted, and performing sacred anthems in some air-built cathedral, whose vaulted roofs and fretted aisles are not palpable to sense? is it the far-sounding surge of the sea, compelled into harmonious rhythm by the wandering ghost of Beethoven, and wafted inland by the summer breeze? is it the Berlin choristers in a balloon singing and sailing up aloft? No. What, then, can it be? Now it swells a grand billowy diapason, pervading the whole atmosphere, and now it dies away in the faintest murmur, returning again in fitful ripples of sound until it rolls as grandly as before. It is some time ere I discover that this mysterious concert is due to the action of the wind, which has gradually arisen to a gentle breeze, and is operating upon the strained wires of the electric telegraph, which here crosses the rail diagonally for a distance of nearly thirty yards, the wires being wound up to more than ordinary tension, and thus converted into a monster æolian harp. I am now aware that the notes I hear, grand and bewitching as they are, are not the fundamental notes given out by these long heavy wires, and that, were it not for the universal law which gives the twelfths and fifteenths along with the grand notes, it is doubtful whether, being so near the wires, I should hear any musical sound at all on the platform where I am sitting. To test this theory, I get up and make my way to a rising ground covered with a young plantation of firs and beeches in the rear of the station. It is as I had expected: from this point I hear the weird harmonies in tones fully two octaves deeper, but then

I do not hear them so distinctly, and should not hear them at all did I not listen intently to catch them.

I am aware of voices on the other side of the plantation, alternating with the click and thud of several mattocks upon the stony soil. Passing between the young trees, where I rouse up some of the companions of my speculative duck, I come out upon the edge of a bean-field, where four or five labourers are busily hoeing up the weeds from the beans, which, by the way, seem to be the only crops looking at all promising just now in this grain-growing district. An ancient labourer hails me with a "Good artemoon, sir," and commences a lamentable diatribe on the backwardness of the spring and the dismal state of the crops. He points to the broad acres of autumn-sown land which should be green and thick in the blade, but where the trace of a green blade is scarcely visible, owing to the long prevalence of wintry winds and biting frost. He is in despair about his own cabbages, which have all gone to the bad, and is going to tell me the price they are demanding for new plants—when, "ding, dong—ding, dong," there goes the platform bell, which is a signal to me that my train is in sight at last, so that I am compelled to run for it and cut off his tale in the middle.

In two minutes more I have got through my two hours' probation at Clodbury, and am trundling along towards the place of my destination. Ere half an hour more has elapsed, I see the square stone tower of Grey Town church sleeping in the sunshine, and the flocks and herds pasturing in the quiet meadows through which the gentle brook meanders lazily, and flashes back the beams of the April sun. "Grey Town! Who's for Grey Town?" bawls the porter. "This your luggage, sir?" "Yes—what's o'clock?" "Three fifty, sir."

Just in the nick of time to catch them sitting down to dinner.

HALLER THE PHYSICIAN.

AMONG the brightest ornaments of the medical profession, none shines more conspicuously for learning, genius, and virtue, than Albrecht von Haller. He was the son of an advocate at Berne, in Switzerland, and was born in that city on the 10th of October, 1708. He very early gave proofs of superior capacity; and when other children were only beginning to read, he was studying Bayle and Moreri. At nine, he knew Greek, and began to learn Hebrew. His father died when he was at the age of thirteen, and he was sent to the public school of Berne, having before that time had a domestic tutor, whose intolerable harshness he remembered with horror all the rest of his life. At school he was distinguished for his knowledge of Greek and Latin, but was chiefly remarkable for his poetical genius; and his poems in German were read and admired through the whole empire. In his sixteenth year he began the study of medicine at Tubingen, under Duvernay and Camerarius. After two years, the fame of Boerhaave attracted him to Leyden, where he had the advantage also of hear-

ing Ruysch and Albinus. In 1727, he visited England, and was kindly received by Sir Hans Sloane, president of the Royal Society, and founder of the British Museum. He went to Paris, and studied anatomy with Winslow; but the police having information of his zeal in that pursuit, he was obliged to make a hasty retreat from that city. He returned, after the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge requisite for the medical profession, to Berne, his native place, with the intention of practising there.

He first applied for appointment to some medical institution, but his countrymen did not know his value, and adverse interests prevailed. George II made him Professor in the University of Gottingen, in the dominions of Hanover. Soon after his going thither, driving along the streets of Gottingen, then in a sad state of disrepair, the carriage of the new professor was upset, and his wife was killed. He was devotedly attached to her, and bewailed her death in an ode, the finest he ever wrote. He successfully cultivated all the sciences akin to medicine, and especially botany. The king procured him a patent of nobility from the emperor; and he is commonly known as Baron Haller. On the death of Dillenius, he had the offer of the chair of botany at Oxford.

The States of Holland invited him to fill the chair of Albinus. The king of Prussia, Frederick the Great, was anxious he should succeed Maupertuis at Berlin, and by his command Marshal Keith wrote to offer him the chancellorship of the University of Halle, vacant by the death of the celebrated Wolff. Count Orloff invited him to Russia. All these offers, however flattering, he declined, and remained at Gottingen for seventeen years, till, finding his health declining, he retired to his birth-place, Berne, whose citizens were now sensible of his merits. A pension for life was conferred upon him, and he filled several of the most important offices in the state. He was for several of his last years confined to his house, but still continued writing till within a few days of his death, which happened on the 12th of December, 1777.

It would not interest the general reader were we to enumerate his various medical works, which abound with information on the subjects treated of. We shall merely mention his "*Elementa Physiologie*," in eight volumes quarto, known throughout Europe, and full of science, learning, and the most candid statement of the claims of every author to discoveries in physiology. His works in German are numerous. He wrote in opposition to the deists and atheistical philosophers of his day; he wrote also on the principles of constitutional liberty as exemplified in England, "*Letters to a German Princess*," "*Letters to his Daughter*," and numerous poems, among which, one entitled "*The Alps*," and the Ode on the death of his wife, are greatly admired.

Mr. Fletcher of Madeley, whom friends and opponents alike revered as a saint, was in Switzerland, his native country, for the recovery of his health, during the years 1778 and 1779. Writing from Nyon, his birth-place, December, 15th, 1779, he says: "Last year saw the death of three great men of these parts—Rousseau, Voltaire, and Baron

Haller, a senator of Berne. The last was a great philosopher, a profound politician, and an agreeable poet; but he was particularly famous for his skill in botany, anatomy, and physic. He has enriched the republic of letters by such a number of publications in Latin and German, that the catalogue of them is alone a pamphlet. This truly great man has given another proof of the truth of Lord Bacon's assertion, that although smatterers in philosophy are often impious, true philosophers are always religious. I have met with an old pious apostolic clergyman, who was intimate with the Baron, and used to accompany him over the Alps, in his rambles after the wonders of nature. With what pleasure (said the minister) did we admire and adore the wisdom of the God of nature, and sanctify our researches by the sweet praises of the God of grace! When the emperor (Joseph II, son of Maria Theresa) passed this way, he stabbed Voltaire to the heart by not paying him a visit; but he waited on Haller, was two hours with him, and heard from him such pious talk as he never heard from half the philosophers of the age. The Baron was then ill of the disorder which afterwards carried him off. Upon his death-bed he went through sore conflicts about his interest in Christ, and sent to the old minister, requesting his most fervent prayers, and wishing him to find the way through the dark valley smoother than he found it himself. However, in his last moments, he expressed a renewed confidence in God's mercy through Christ, and died in peace. The old clergyman added that he thought the Baron went through this conflict to humble him thoroughly, and perhaps to chastise him for having sometimes given way to a degree of self-complacency at the thought of his amazing parts, and of the respect they procured him from the learned world. He was obliged to become last in his own eyes, that he might become first and truly great in the sight of the Lord."

DEATH.

BY GEORGE HERBERT.

DEATH, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,
Nothing but bones,
The sad effect of sadder groans:
Thy month was open, but thou couldst not sing.

For we consider'd thee as at some six
Or ten years hence,
After the loss of life and sense,
Flesh being turn'd to dust, and bones to sticks.

We look'd on this side of thee, shooting short;
Where we did find
The shells of fledge souls left behind,
Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort.

But since our Saviour's death did put some blood
Into thy face:
Thou art grown fair and full of grace,
Much in request, much sought for, as a good.

For we do now behold thee gay and glad,
As at doomsday;
When souls shall wear their new array,
And all thy bones with beauty shall be clad.

Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
Half that we have
Unto an honest faithful grave;
Making our pillows either down, or dust.

VARIETIES.

THE JULY ECLIPSE.—No. 5 of the "Monthly Notices" of the Astronomical Society contains a great deal of information important to astronomers who contemplate going to Spain to witness the forthcoming solar eclipse. The mountains of Asturias, or the Cantabrian Pyrenees, range parallel to the north coast of Spain, at a distance of forty or fifty miles from it. From these mountains two chains run south-east, bounding the valley of the Ebro. The chain on the south-west of the valley lies nearly in the centre of the shadow; and at the point where it makes a sharp bend stands the mountain Moncayo, in the very centre of the shadow, and commanding extensive views favourable for noting the effect of the eclipse on the landscape. It is understood that the French and Spanish astronomers will make this their station.

CUNNINGHAM'S PATENT TOP-SAILS.—In our account of a visit to the Royal United Service Museum, "Leisure Hour," No. 435, p. 261, we referred to a plan for reefing top-sails from deck, instead of the often perilous operation of going aloft, and stated that the principle of the invention has long been known to the Chinese. In justice to Captain Cunningham, the author of this useful invention, it is right to explain that the Chinese junks have no top-sails, but their sails are composed of matting stretched on a number of bamboos; and in reefing them, stretchers are collected in the bight of a rope suspended from the mast-head, and the sail is doubled up in the same manner as a fan. In Captain Cunningham's plan, the top-sails are reefed by rolling them up on yards which are fitted to revolve for that purpose, and the rotating power is the gravitation of the yard itself. While the Chinese reef the sails at the foot by doubling them up, the English top-sails are reefed at the head by rolling them up in the yard. Of the efficiency of Captain Cunningham's patent we give one out of many striking testimonies. The master of a ship which recently made the voyage from England to Vancouver's Island (16,000 miles) thus writes: "Off Cape Horn especially, the admirable working of the top-sails during the severe weather in the depth of winter was a source of much comfort to me. We stood as far south as 60 degrees, and not a day passed without reefs being taken in or let out, frequently during heavy storms of snow, and I never experienced the least difficulty in working the top-sails, nor had any occasion to send one hand aloft, although sometimes the ropes were so clogged with ice and frozen so stiff that they would scarcely render through the blocks. I myself used with ease to reef the mizen-top-sail, while the officer of the watch, with only one hand would reef the fore, and never upon any occasion have I turned up the watch below to reef Captain Cunningham's top-sails." Not to speak of the convenience and economy of this invention, it must prove an inestimable boon in saving life, since many a brave seaman and boy has been lost when sent aloft in cold stormy weather to reef the top-sails.

POSTAL ACCURACY.—We sometimes complain of the machinery of our post-offices. Perhaps a coin too carelessly secured tempts a poor letter-carrier beyond his principles. Perhaps on some busy day a letter which we peculiarly value is shoved aside and is delivered some hours later than usual. Yet, ought we not rather to admire the habitual correctness of the machine than its occasional divergence? A curious case has lately come before us, which illustrates the sure if slow working of the system. In the year 1847 a letter was posted in London, by an absent writer, directed only Miss C. T. M. In which part of the British Isle those initials were personified was not indicated: it might have been in any part of the known world. With a penny stamp, this letter was intrusted to one of Sir Rowland Hill's receiving boxes. Besides the outpourings of the writer's heart, it contained the half of a Bank of England note. After some days it was discovered that the letter had not reached its destination, and many suggestions as to its fate were made. The half note, which had been more carefully secured in the desk

of the absent lady than the one which had been sent forth, was, after due time had elapsed, exchanged by the liberality of the Directors for a perfect note, and the accident was dismissed from the memories of the parties interested. But the post had received and carefully guarded the letter and its contents. There was a lady in Ireland whose initials corresponded with those of the direction. In March, 1860, she received from the post-master of her county town an intimation that if she would apply, and identify her claim, the property would be restored to her. How could she prove that the writer of that letter, directed only to Miss C. T. M., intended it for her? for initials only were signed to the long-lost communication. Her friend had been as faithful to her as the postal authorities to their trust. A letter was in her pocket, in the same handwriting. Miss C. T. M. handed it to the little window at C—, and the letter with its contents, yellow with time, but legible, was returned to her, after an interval of thirteen years.

A MISTAKE IN COCHIN-CHINA.—First impressions are so commonly erroneous in this part of the world, that it is quite enough to say that a book is written by a wayfarer—a griffin—to nullify at least one half of its authority. It is difficult, even with the utmost care, to ascertain the meaning of all that one sees; more by far to get at the truth of what is heard. I remember once paying a visit, with a friend, to a Cochin-Chinese man of war, which brought an envoy to Canton on his way to Peking. We were received with politeness, and contrived to carry on an imperfect communication through the medium of the Chinese language, which each party understood when written. After looking about the vessel, we prepared to leave, and had mounted the gangway for this purpose, when we saw the marines forming a line on a broad plank which ran fore and aft the ship each side, on the top of the bulwarks. By the time we reached the boat, we heard a stroke of a gong, and instantly a clapping of sticks along the line of marines. On looking up, the captain bowed very graciously to us from the gangway, while the gong struck again, accompanied as before by the marines clicking the bamboo sticks in their hands. What else could it be than a Cochin-Chinese salute?—and so we set it down as meant to do us honour. The gong struck a third time, and again the click, click, as before, with a still deeper bow from the gangway; we endeavoured to show our sense of the honour done us, by bowing too. Rap went the gong, and click went the bamboos, as before, but following each other quicker and quicker, until both were confounded in a kind of *réveille*, by which time we were a long way off, when it ceased. I afterwards ascertained that this performance was nothing but their mode of worship at vespers.

NEW ZEALAND PROVERBS.—He who is valiant in fight is apt to humble, but he who is valiant in cultivating food will die of old age.

Fuel is only sought against winter, but food is required all the year round.

We can search every corner of the house, but the corner of the heart we cannot.

A small man is not to be despised, because, though small, he may be like the tough tea-tree.

The grub is small, but he eats hard trees.

Passing clouds can be seen, but not passing thoughts.

They who give as well as take shall prosper.

If a man yawns when fishing, he will catch few fish.—*Dr. Arthur Thomson's Story of New Zealand.*

CORK-CUTTING.—An American has invented a machine to cut corks. The movement is horizontal and rotatory, turning out 144 perfectly cut wine or beer corks, or 36,000 daily, of ten hours. As the wheel goes round, the four blades are attended by four girls or boys, whose duty is merely to feed the machine, whilst the corks fall down a spout to the sorters underneath. It makes nine revolutions a minute, and will cut, if required, four different size corks at a time, either round or oval.